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THE VALUE OF PUBLICITY IN REFORM

BY ARTHUR T. VANCE,

Editor of the *Woman's Home Companion*.

A large corporation was giving a dinner to its heads of departments to celebrate the year of prosperity which had just closed. After feasting, speeches were in order, and finally came the turn of the gentleman who had charge of the German department. He got up and expressed himself as follows:

"*Gentlemens*: Ve vas all here, hafing a mighty goot time. Ve haf a right to haf a goot time, because ve haf been prosperous in business. Ve was also feeling goot, because ve haf lots of goot thinks to eat. Ve vas habby, because ve vas able to sit here und drink our champaign at four dollars a bottle, und smoke our cigars at fifty cents apiece mit de satisfaction of knowing dat the house vas standing for de whole exbense. But, gentlemens, ve must not forgot dose unfortunates elsewhere in de world who ain't feelin' so fine as ve vas to-night; dose unfortunate people who haf not got goot champaign to drink at four dollars a bottle und cigars to smoke at fifty cents apiece. Ve must not forgot dose poor peoples who haf not efen got a crust of breat on vich to lay their veary heads. Gentlemens, I tink ve should do somethings to show our feelings for dose poor peoples. I feel from de bottom of my bosom up dot now is de time to show our sympathy. Gentlemens, I probosc dot ve gif tree cheers for de poor."

Now, the gentleman was earnest and meant well in his remarks, and really did not do any harm. In fact, if you look at it in the right way you will see that he was doing his best to give publicity to the cause of philanthropy.

I hope I shall not be accused of stealing Senator Beveridge's thunder if I tell you the story he told me of how he was led to introduce his much talked of federal child labor bill. A year ago Senator Beveridge prepared a stump speech which he delivered at various

public gatherings up and down the land. In this speech was a four line reference to child labor. The child labor paragraph was listened to with interest, of course, but it did not seem to arouse any especial enthusiasm. This was last year's speech. In starting out on this year's political campaign, Senator Beveridge was once more called to the stump. Now, Senator Beveridge is a mightily interesting talker any way, and we always listen to what he has to say, but this year he noticed in his very first speech, when he came to the little reference to child labor, that his audience began to sit up and take notice, so, with the inherent instinct of the born orator, ever watching the opportunity to drive home a good point, he added a few lines off hand. And thus the child labor paragraph began to grow with every repetition, as Senator Beveridge noticed more and more interest in that topic, until child labor came to be the dominant note of his address.

He looked around him for the reason for this remarkable increase in interest, and soon found out to his own satisfaction that it was due to the way the magazines and newspapers of the country had been talking about child labor month after month until public sentiment had been so thoroughly aroused that it had become a national issue. Here is a specific instance of the value of publicity in child labor reform.

Let us look at the situation from another point of view. Publicity in reform is merely the application of modern business methods to reform work. This statement is so obviously true that it seems almost unnecessary to make it.

The manufacturer who has a product in which he believes, spends thousands of dollars in buying publicity in the newspapers and magazines to tell the people of the country about the virtues of his product. We call this sort of publicity, advertising, and it is good advertising if the product lives up to the claims he makes for it. We, who are interested in reform, do precisely the same thing when we take steps to interest the newspapers and magazines in our pet theories, and if our reform is a good thing the people of the country will stand by and back us up. In other words, advertising publicity and reform publicity both accomplish the same thing. They arouse public interest and public sentiment in favor of the object which they have in view.

I do not think any great reform ever has been accomplished or ever will be accomplished without what we call public sentiment back of it. It is possible, of course, to persuade legislatures and congresses to pass laws, but laws are never adequately enforced unless backed up by public sentiment.

Not long ago a certain state passed a child labor law, not a very good one, but better than nothing, and among the inspectors appointed was a man who liked to sit on the fence until public opinion directed him on which side he should flop. He went among his neighbors, dropping a question here and a hint there to see if strict attention to the law would be required of him. He speedily discovered that rigid enforcement was expected and without delay. Public sentiment against child labor was rampant in that state, and the law just passed was a law that had been demanded by the women and mothers of the community, and they were determined that it should not become a dead letter.

Publicity has always been the active factor in the production of this public sentiment. This was true even in the old days. But then it was generally accidental publicity. When Charles Reade wrote "*It Is Never Too Late to Mend*" he did not think that his book was going to be so influential in hastening the cause of prison reform in England. When Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" she did not dream of the great reform her story was destined to work. Yet this was publicity of the finest sort. What a great thing it would be for child labor reform if the horrors, the pathos, the pity, the sin of it all could be masterfully presented in the form of a great novel.

But nowadays we plan publicity in a more systematic, more scientific manner. The problem is merely one of how best to reach the people whom we want to interest, whose help we want to enlist in the cause. A modern campaign of publicity is planned precisely as a campaign of advertising. And in both cases the effectiveness of the campaign depends upon the worthiness of the cause.

We have come to place a greater dependence than ever upon the power of the magazine in molding public opinion. This is not a reflection upon the daily press, whose good work the magazines always supplement, but it is simply due to a better insight on the part of the general public into the making of newspapers and magazines.

The public has figured out that the magazine, in the nature of things, is able to reflect a more mature opinion. Everybody knows that the magazine is the product of weeks and months, while the newspaper is the product of hours. The natural sequence is that the magazine article is given the greater credit and reliability.

It was magazine publicity that brought about the final downfall of the Louisiana lottery. It was magazine publicity that downed Bill Tweed. It was a magazine that prepared the way for the present investigations into Standard Oil. It was a magazine article that stirred up all this talk about the conditions in Panama, that finally led to the President going down there himself to investigate. The magazines have been foremost in the fight for pure food, and for the regulation of patent medicines. It can be safely said that the magazines of to-day are one of the greatest powers for good in the country.

It was also a magazine that aroused the public sentiment which has made child labor reform a national issue. The *Woman's Home Companion* took up the cause of child labor last spring. We did it because we thought it was a good thing and deserved our support. We decided then and there, with sincere enthusiasm and earnest purpose, to fight the evils of child labor with all our might and main. Reform should begin at home, so we looked to our own factory in Springfield, Ohio. There was no child labor there to stop, I am mighty glad to say, and there never had been, but after careful consideration of the case from every point of view, we voluntarily decided to give our employees at Springfield the eight-hour day, and now after 4.30 in the afternoon every man and woman in the plant is through with his or her work and given an opportunity to go home to their families, to till the garden and enjoy God's sunshine.

We have worked in sympathetic co-operation with the National Child Labor Committee from the start. We felt that we were in the position to give the National Child Labor Committee just exactly the assistance it most needed—publicity. We consulted with them and sent out our investigators and began to publish the series of articles on the evils of child labor, with which you all are familiar. The next step in this publicity campaign was to call upon our readers to manifest their interest in the cause by joining our Anti-Child

Slavery League. We asked Dr. Edward Everett Hale, America's grand old man, to write an appeal to the women of America to help in the anti-child labor crusade.

Exploited and made public in this manner, the Anti-Child Slavery League grew rapidly. The earnest people of the land, from Maine to California, hastened to enroll their names. Attorney generals of several states asked us to suggest adequate laws, presidents of colleges and of a multitude of societies wrote for information upon which addresses could be based, ministers of the Gospel everywhere applauded the work and offered to organize branch associations, the rank and file of the people took an active interest in the work, and finally we were asked by the National Child Labor Committee to merge more completely with it, so that the work of both organizations could be directed under one head and without duplication of energy.

We enlisted 2,000 of the most prominent newspapers of the United States to help us in our publicity campaign, thus placing the progress of child labor reform before the eyes of more than 5,000,000 people a week. We talked child labor reform from one end of the land to the other. In short, we brought to the work of the National Child Labor Committee and its kindred organizations just what they wanted and needed. And now, that an amalgamation between the National Child Labor Committee and the Anti-Child Slavery League of the *Woman's Home Companion* has been made, we are more heartily and earnestly enlisted in the cause than ever.

The results of this co-operative effort are already beginning to manifest themselves.

It was this widespread publicity campaign that led Senator Beveridge to realize the importance of the child labor issue. It was this same publicity that helped influence President Roosevelt to make the recommendation in his annual message that the national government take a hand in investigating child labor conditions. The President still further recognizes the value of this publicity in a signed statement, printed in the *Woman's Home Companion* for January, in which he expressed in ringing terms just where he stands on child labor reform.

This is only the beginning of the campaign of publicity in behalf

of child labor reform. I can pledge the continued support of the magazines and newspapers of the country. We have just begun our efforts in behalf of child labor reform. We will continue to do our share, and more than our share, wherever possible, until the glorious work of saving the children of the nation is an accomplished fact.